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## 2011 California Audio Show Report

Submitted by The Computer Au... on Thu, 07/21/2011 - 00:07



The 2011 California Audio Show was a blast. First and foremost I enjoyed meeting several Computer Audiophile readers, answering their questions, and thanking them for being so loyal. Seriously if every show was like this I'd attend them all! In general I was enthused by the high level of knowledge of the show attendees. Maybe there's a reason the Bay Area has the highest population of Computer Audiophile readers in the world :-~) The California Audio Show couldn't have been more opposite from the Newport Show in June. The

Newport show was full of physical media on CD or vinyl. The CA Show was full of computers and music servers. I only saw a few rooms without computer based audio of some sort. In addition to meeting people and seeing a plethora of computer audio systems I found what could easily be my 2011 product of the year.

**WideaLab Aurender S10**

Hands down my product of the show, and possibly product of the year, is [WideaLab's Aurender S10](#) music server. Finally someone has built a music sever like a true high end audio component. Internal and external build quality is the best I've seen in any music server to date. Externally the Aurender S10 is comprised of very solid aluminum top and bottom plates. The Aurender name is nicely engraved into the top plate. The left and right sides of the S10 have heat fins somewhat similar to the Pass Labs XA100.5 amplifiers. The front aluminum panel contains a stellar AMOLED display (Active Matrix Organic Light Emitting Diode). WideaLab currently offers three front panel display modes. Blue or yellow VU meters that display an analog-like smoothness unlike any other digital display I've seen and a simple text based display with artist, track, file format, bit depth, and sample rate shown in easy to read letters. All three display options can be dimmed or completely shut off via front panel buttons or iPad. It's my understanding the display options can also be updated without reinventing the wheel. The rear of the S10 contains AES/EBU, optical S/PDIF (TosLink), and electrical S/PDIF (coaxial) audio outputs. Ethernet and USB ports are available for connection to a network and loading music on to the internal hard drives. Currently USB audio output is unsupported.

Internally the fanless Aurender S10 is pristine. The aluminum chassis inside separates the sensitive audio output bard with OCXO Oven Controlled Crystal Oscillators and the linear power supply from the hard drives and the motherboard. Even the audio board and PSU are separated by a thick aluminum panel. The S10 photos below clearly show a spinning 3TB hard drive and a 64GB solid state drive. The Aurender S30 model can accommodate three 2TB drives and possibly 3TBs drives if internal testing goes well.

The Aurender S10 runs a highly customized Linux operating system. It's essentially a Linux computer taken to an audiophile extreme. The S10 supports 16 bit / 44.1 kHz through 24 bit / 192 kHz audio output via all three physical interfaces. All relevant file formats are supported such as FLAC, AIFF, WAVE, and I believe Apple Lossless (verification required). Loading files on to the spinning hard disk is done either via an external USB drive that copies the files to the S10 or via Ethernet. When my review unit arrives in around one week I will likely rip music with dBpoweramp directly to the S10 over Ethernet while simultaneously ripping to my NAS drive for backup. The S10's use of an SSD is very smart. When music is added to the playlist the S10 copies it to the SSD immediately and turns off the spinning drive.

The Aurender iPad application is the best software interface I've yet seen outside of a full Meridan-Sooloos system. I was very impressed at the speed with which search results were displayed. As I typed in Steely Dan the search results dwindled with every letter until only Steely Dan remained on the screen. Scrolling through the album art with the flick of a finger was as fast as any app I've seen. Literally there was no delay. Browsing by Artist, Album, Track, Genre was very intuitive. Search results can also be filtered by selecting Artist, Genre, etc. Upon locating an album or track for playback it's simple to press and hold a finger on the selection that causes a popup menu to appear. Options such as Play Now, Add to playlist, etc... are available from this menu.

I could go on and on about the Aurender S10 but then I'd have nothing to right about in my upcoming review. I did have a limited chance to hear the sound quality from this unit but under show conditions I was unable to render an opinion. However, a couple colleagues setup the S10 in another room connected to a very high end audio system and were very impressed with the sound. I respect their opinions greatly and can't wait to get the S10 in my system.



COMPUTER MUSIC PLAYERS



Freakin' amazing!  
There is a localization and detail of instruments and voice and a spaciousness of reproduction that comprise the Holy Grail of my 30+ years as an audiophile.

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